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INF: The Prospects for West European Deployment and the USSR's Reactions

Special National Intelligence Estimate

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SNIE 11/20-3-82
13 October 1982

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Information available as of 13 October 1982 was
used in the preparation of this Estimate.

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THE NATIONAL FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE BOARD CONCURS, EXCEPT AS NOTED IN THE TEXT.

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of the Estimate:

The Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and the intelligence organization of the Department of State.

Also Participating:

The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army

The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy

The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force

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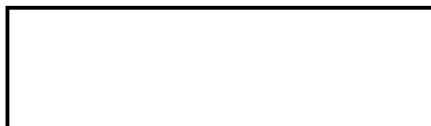
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KEY JUDGMENTS

Will the West Europeans Proceed With INF Deployment?

Deployment of the intermediate-range nuclear force (INF) in Western Europe is likely to proceed generally as planned even though serious pitfalls remain.

We believe that West Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, and perhaps Belgium will go ahead with deployment, unless their governments and publics come to blame the United States for lack of progress in the Geneva INF negotiations with the Soviets. We are agreed that deployment in Belgium and Italy will largely depend on the ultimate West German position and that, under foreseeable circumstances, prospects are poor for deployment in the Netherlands.

Overall, prospects for deployment will depend on the risks that governing West European political parties are willing to take, particularly if civil disorder accompanies preparations for deployments. To avoid this situation, most West European leaders hope the United States and the Soviet Union will reach agreement at Geneva. Most of them would approve any arms control agreement that promised significantly reduced Soviet INF preponderance and that the United States found acceptable.

The election of Helmut Kohl as West German Chancellor ensures that the Bonn government will remain firmly committed to INF and will take a prodeployment position in the promised March 1983 elections. Chancellor Kohl will also reiterate Bonn's commitment to the arms control tract of the dual decision in order to maintain support for INF deployment. Nonetheless, obstacles remain and management of the issue will remain difficult, especially if the out-of-power Social Democratic Party (SPD) takes an official position opposing INF as part of its election platform. Helmut Schmidt now appears likely to lead the SPD election campaign as the chancellor candidate. Most agencies believe he would maintain his commitment to the dual decision despite serious pressure from the party's left wing for a more critical stance. An alternative view¹ is that Schmidt would take a more ambiguous position

¹ The holders of this view are the Director, Defense Intelligence Agency, and the Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy.

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during the campaign, leaving open the possibility for delay in deployment in order to assuage his party's left wing. If a leftist majority develops in the SPD during the election period, chances will increase that Schmidt would not be the chancellor candidate and the SPD would take a strong anti-INF posture. At this juncture, all agencies believe that Kohl's Christian Democratic Union and the Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) have the edge in the upcoming campaign.

A continuation of the present coalition or its replacement with a CDU/CSU majority government after the promised spring elections would improve the prospects that INF deployment will take place on schedule. But it also increases the possibility of a deep polarization of West German society over INF. Following the elections, SPD as well as trade union opposition to the December 1983 deployments would probably increase. Serious violence and civil disobedience could accompany deployment activities. Nonetheless, the CDU-led government is likely to continue with deployment; its steadfastness would be strengthened if it wins a solid majority in the March elections, and if it can convince the West German public that the USSR, not the United States, is principally to blame for a lack of progress at Geneva.

How Do the Soviets View INF in Western Europe?

The outcome of the INF issue has major consequences for the Soviets. Successful deployment at a minimum would help undercut their military strategy in Europe and would demonstrate the cohesiveness and vitality of the Western Alliance. By stopping deployment, the Soviets would retain their current medium-range nuclear edge, contribute toward eviscerating NATO, and revive uncertainty about whether US strategic forces continue to be linked to Western Europe's defense. As a consequence, Moscow has worked hard to derail INF through both overt and covert means.

Moscow is not confident it can stop NATO's modernization program, however, and is certainly aware that time is running out. We can, therefore, expect an intensification of a "carrot and stick" campaign, particularly focused on West Germany, to convince the West Europeans to oppose deployment. The Soviets could threaten, for example, to counter INF deployments with missile deployments of their own that will result, they will say, only in establishing the "balance of terror" at a higher level. They could also offer the prospect that an arms control solution is possible, if only deployment does not take place.

An offer by the USSR to dismantle significant numbers of its SS-20 bases within range of Western Europe, in return for no deployment of

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Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs), would have a very unsettling effect on deployment prospects, especially because it might be attractive in West Germany. In recent weeks, senior Soviet officials have made conflicting statements about their willingness to discuss the reduction or removal of SS-20s threatening Western Europe. These statements should be regarded as more probing than authoritative, because Moscow will not want to make any significant concessions as long as it believes that INF deployment may be derailed without them. The possibility of a major Soviet initiative involving SS-20s cannot be ruled out as the INF deployment date draws near.

What Will the Soviets Do If Deployment Proceeds?

We believe that the Soviet campaign against INF will not end after the initial deployment in December 1983 but will continue as long as Moscow believes it has a chance to forestall full implementation. As deployments begin, the Soviets probably will escalate diplomatic pressure on host governments—particularly the second-stage nations (Belgium and the Netherlands)—and may carry out large military exercises and recall ambassadors for consultations. They are unlikely to abandon both START and INF talks, but they might move to fold INF into START.

The most likely and wide-ranging military response to deployment will be in the European area. Initiation of deployment is almost certain to result in resumption of the construction of new SS-20 bases in the European USSR, in line with Brezhnev's March 1982 statement that a moratorium on new placements of the missile in the European USSR would be in effect until the United States begins "practical steps" for deployment of P-IIs and GLCMs.

The Soviets will almost certainly continue a number of programs that will add to their own nuclear force capabilities and partially offset the military significance of P-IIs and GLCMs. These include efforts to acquire more effective warning and improved defenses against ballistic and cruise missile attacks, and the deployment of additional nuclear strike forces opposite Europe—GLCMs, air- and sea-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs and SLCMs), and shorter range ballistic missiles (SS-12s/22s and SS-23s). If INF deployment proceeds, the Soviets probably will portray their ongoing programs as being in response to the threat caused by NATO's INF deployment.

Brezhnev, in the March 1982 statement, also said that the Soviet Union will take steps to place the "other side, including the United States and its territories," in an "analogous position" once NATO

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deployment begins. The most difficult estimate for us is how the Soviets may carry out the US aspect of this threat. Logically, "analogous" would mean systems deployed outside the USSR that would provide the same kind of threat against the United States the Soviets claim is created for them by P-IIs and GLCMs: short flight times and greater accuracy of the P-II, reduction in warning time of attack, and increased vulnerability of their command and control systems. In the absence of significant direct evidence, however, our judgments on what type of "analogous" responses they may resort to are based on our perceptions of Moscow's beliefs about (1) the seriousness of the threat posed to the USSR by the prospective NATO INF, (2) its remaining opportunities to affect NATO resolve, and (3) the risk it perceives in any particular response.

We do not believe the Soviets view INF deployments as so harmful to their security that deployment of P-IIs and GLCMs in Western Europe must be stopped at all costs. We believe, however, that they do perceive them as threatening enough to require some "analogous" responses, primarily to prevent NATO from strengthening its capabilities by following through on INF deployment.

The most "analogous" responses would probably involve Soviet military moves that would threaten the United States from Cuba or from submarines off the US coasts. Regarding these possible steps we believe:

- It is likely that the Soviets will make public their threats to deploy, or actually deploy, SLCM-equipped submarines near US coasts.
- It is possible that Moscow will take in Cuba ambiguous and fairly unprovocative actions—such as expanding airfields or deploying additional MIG-23 Flogger aircraft—that could easily be halted without a loss of Soviet prestige.
- It is unlikely that the Soviets will take unambiguous and unconcealed measures in Cuba—such as the preparation of SS-20 bases or construction of nuclear weapons storage sites—that clearly violate the 1962 missile crisis understandings and which could not be reversed without the appearance of another Soviet backdown.
- It is unlikely that the Soviets will covertly introduce nuclear weapons into Cuba or make concealed preparations for bases for these weapons, since these actions would risk a major military confrontation with the United States.

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Even though we judge the probability as low that the Soviets would introduce land-based nuclear weapons into Cuba, we believe that the potential significance of this option is such that it must be kept constantly in mind by the Intelligence Community. We recognize that our assessment is heavily influenced by our assumption that the INF deployments are not viewed by Moscow as so threatening to their national security that they must be stopped at all costs.

What Would Be the Consequences of No INF Deployment and No Agreement at Geneva?

An outcome with no US-Soviet agreement at Geneva coupled with no INF deployment in Western Europe would be a pronounced victory for the USSR, which would have succeeded in retaining its nuclear advantage in Europe while blunting NATO's riposte. Such an outcome—the defeat of both “tracks” of NATO's 1979 dual decision—would be very serious for the political cohesion of the Alliance and the security of Western Europe.²

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